

Haftarah - Parshat Chukath (Judges 11:1-33)

based on the translations of

Robert Alter, Aryeh Kaplan, Stone Edition Tanach, JPS, Jerusalem Bible, New English Bible, New King James Bible

modeled after the recording in *Navigating the Bible II*:

<https://bible.ort.org/books/haftarotd4.asp?action=displaypage&book=4&chapter=11&verse=1&portion=43>

11:1 Now Jephthah [was a Gileadite]. He was [a mighty man] of valor, [but he was the son] of a woman [who was a harlot]. Yet he was fathered by Gilead; [thus was Jephthah].

2 [And there had been born] [to Gilead's wife] [for him], [other sons], and when they grew up—his wife's sons—[they drove out] Jephthah, saying to him, "[You won't inherit] [in our father's house], [because of the fact] that the son of different woman [is what you are]."

3 So Jephthah ran off to flee [from his brothers], and settled in the land [that was known as "Tov"], [and there gathered around] Jephthah some men [that were wastrels], [and they ventured forth] [along with him].

4 [And it happened] [after some time], there fought the sons of Ammon [against Israel].

5 [And it came to pass] as they were fighting—the sons of Ammon—[against Israel], [there went out] the elders of Gilead to bring back Jephthah from the land of Tov.

6 [And they said] to Jephthah, "[Come with us]: come and be for us our captain, that we may wage battle with the sons of Ammon."

7 [To this replied] Jephthah to the elders of Gilead,

"[Is it not] you [who in fact] [despised me], [and drove me out] from the house [of my father]? [So why therefore] [do you] [come to me] [at this time] when you're in trouble, [as you are now]?"

8 [To this there responded] the elders of Gilead, [saying this to Jephthah], "[It is for this] [that we now] [have come back] to you: [that you may] [go with us] [to do battle] with the sons of Ammon. [You shall be] for us our chieftain [over all] the inhabitants of Gilead."

9 Then replied Jephthah to the elders [of the town of Gilead],

"[If I am brought back]—[if you] [bring me home] [to wage war] with the sons of Ammon, [if they are delivered] [by YHWH]—[if they are given over] [before me], [then it is I indeed] who will serve for you as your chief."

10 Then said the elders of Gilead to Jephthah, '[May YHWH] serve as a witness [between us], if in accord with your word we fail to do.'

11:11 [And so went back] Jephthah with the elders of Gilead.

[They took him]: the people [set him up] [over them] as their leader [and as their captain].

And recorded [by Jephthah himself] [were all of his words] [before YHWH] at Mitzpah.

12 [Then sent] Jephthah some messengers to the king of the Ammonites [to say to him],

“[What is there between me] and you, that you should come against me to wage war in my land?”

13 [And there replied] the king of the Ammonites to the messengers [that were sent by Jephthah],

“[Because of what you took]:

Israel [took my land] [when they came up] from Egypt, from the Arnon to the Jabbok, [and to the Jordan].

[And therefore now] do give them back, peaceably.”

14 And once again, did Jephthah [send out] some messengers | [to the king] of the Ammonites,

15 to say to him, these [are the words] of Jephthah,

“[We did not take it]: [Israel took neither] the land of Moab [nor the land] of the Ammonites.

16 [In fact] [when they came up] [out of Egypt],

[they journeyed]—[Israel going] [through the desert] [to the Sea of Reeds], [until they came] to Kadesh.

17 [Then they sent]—[Israel sent] some messengers | [to the king] of Edom to say, ‘[Let me pass, pray], [through your land].’

[But he would not] listen—the king of Edom—and also [to the king] [of the land of Moab]

[they sent messengers], [but he] [would not consent]. And so remained Israel in Kadesh.

18 [Then they journeyed] [all through the desert], [going all the way around] the land of Edom and the land of Moab,

[and they came] to the east (the sunrise side) of the land of Moab, [and they camped] [on the other side] [of the Arnon].

[But they did not cross] the border of Moab, because the Arnon itself was the border of Moab.

19 And [Israel sent] some messengers to Sichon king of the Amorites, [who in fact] [ruled in Cheshbon],

to say to him for Israel, “Let me pass, pray, *through* your land [to our place].”

20 [But he did not trust them]: Sichon [barred Israel] from crossing his border.

[He mustered his forces]: [Sichon gathered] [all his people] [and made camp] at Jahaz, [and he waged war] [with Israel].

11:21 [And God gave them over]: YHWH God of Israel [delivered up Sihon] [and all of his troops] into the hand of Israel—
 [they struck him down]. [And taken over] by Israel was [the entire land] [of the Amorites] [who were the inhabitants] of that country.
 22 Thus Israel [took possession] of [the entire territory] [of the Amorites]
 [from the Arnon] up to the Jabbok, [and from the wilderness] [to the Jordan].
 23 [Therefore now], [it was YHWH]; | it was [the God of Israel],
 [who drove out] this people, the Amorites, [from before] His people Israel, [and would you] [now possess it]?
 24 [Will you not in fact] [take that] [which is given over] [for you to possess] by Chemosh your god—[would you not] [possess it]?
 [For whatever people] that have been dispossessed [by YHWH] [Eloheinu—our God] [from before us], their land will we possess.
 25 [And so now], [are you better] truly—[are you?] Better than Balak son of Tsippor, king [of the land of Moab]?
 [Did he strive] [at all] [against Israel]? Did he make *any* war [against them]?
 26 [When they dwelt]—[when Israel was living]—in Cheshbon, and her “daughter-towns” (hamlets) and in Arzer [and in her daughter-towns],
 [and in all the cities] that are on the banks of the Arnon, for all of three hundred years, why did you not recover them, during that time?
 27 [As for me], [I have *not* sinned] [against you], [and yet you] [are in fact] [doing to me] [what is evil], by waging [war against me].
 [May God judge]—[may YHWH], [the true judge] [decide today] between the children of Israel and the children of Ammon.
 28 [But he paid] [no heed]—the king of the sons of Ammon—to the words of Jephthah that he had sent to him.
 29 [Then there came] [upon Jephthah] the *ruach* (spirit) of YHWH, and he passed through Gilead and Manasseh,
 [and he went on] to Mitzpeh of Gilead, [and from Mitzpeh] of Gilead [he passed through] to the Ammonites.
 30 [He made a vow]—Jephthah [swore an oath] to YHWH [speaking like this],
 “[If you indeed] [do give over] the sons of Ammon [into my hand],
 31 [it shall be] [that whatever comes out]—that which comes out of the doors of my house [to meet me]
 when I return safe and sound from the sons of Ammon—[it will belong] to YHWH: [I will give it up] [as a burnt offering].
 32 [So he crossed over]: [Jephthah went across] to the Ammonites [to do] [battle with them], and they were given over by YHWH [into his hand].
 33 [And he struck them down] [from Aroer] to where you come to Minnith, a total [of twenty towns], [as far as] Abel Cheramin,
 [with a blow]—[a great blow] indeed. Thus subdued [were the sons] of Ammon [end melody] [from before] the children of Israel.

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate the following pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which will have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
Renew our days	She weeps bitterly	a fire-offering to God

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalsholet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (notably cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a very distinctive melody—for which purpose extra syllables fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “God” or “Adonai”.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)